

Message Text

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11

ACTION NEA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY KABUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1387

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD NIACT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 0956

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AF, PK, PFOR

SUBJ: RISING CONCERN IN KABUL ON AFGHAN/PAKISTAN SITUATION

1. WAHEED ABDULLAH (DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER AND DE FACTO FOREIGN MINISTER) CALLED ME TO HIS OFFICE THIS AFTERNOON (THURSDAY) TO ADVISE ME THAT THERE HAD BEEN AN EMERGENCY MEETING THIS NOON OF THE CABINET TO REVIEW THE AFGHAN/PAKISTAN SITUATION. SAMAD GHANUS AND NASIR ZYAYEE SAT IN. ATMOSPHERE WAS GENERALLY CORDIAL BUT ABDULLAH SEEMED MORE NERVOUS THAN USUAL AND GHANUS INTERJECTED SEVERAL CORRECTIONS OF HIS ENGLISH STATEMENTS DURING THE CONVERSATION--ACTING AS A SORT OF MONITOR. PRACTICE IN PAST HAS BEEN FOR ABDULLAH TO MEET WITH AMBASSADOR OR ME ALONE.

2. PRINCIPAL CONCERN OF GOVERNMENT OF AFGHANISTAN(GOA) AT PRESENT IS REPORTED ACCELERATED PAK TROOP MOVEMENTS ON PAK/AF FRONTIER. ABDULLAH WAS CAREFUL NOT TO DESCRIBE THE SITUATION AS "THREATENING" BUT OF GREAT CONCERN. ABDULLAH SAID GOA THINKS PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO AND SOME ADVISORS LIKE INTERIOR MINISTER QAYUM WANT TO USE THE PRESENT "INTERNAL CRISIS" (ABDULLAH'S PHRASE) TO DE-
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MOLISH THE PROMISING BEGINNING MADE FORWARD PAK/AF DETENTE.

ABDULLAH TOLD ME AGHA SHAHI HAD BEEN DUE TO ARRIVE IN AFGHANISTAN THIS WEEKEND (FEB 15-16); THUS CONFIRMING REPORT IN ISLAMABAD'S 1333.

3. ABDULLAH ASKED GHAUS TO QUOTE FROM A CABLE RECEIVED FROM IYJEPUPL##IN WHICH PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO WAS QUOTED AS SAYING TO THE BBC THAT "THE KILLING OF SHERPAO WAS A MANIFESTATION OF DESPERATION BY TERRORISTS AND AFGHANISTAN HAS A HAND IN IT." ABDULLAH SAID THIS WAS JUST ONE OF "BASELESS, IRRESPONSIBLE CHARGES" BEING DIRECTED AT AFGHANISTAN FROM GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN.

4. IN THIS CONNECTION I NOTED THE CHARGE MADE THAT THE GOA HAD PERMITTED AJMAL KHATTAK TO RUN GUERRILLA TRAINING CAMPS IN AFGHANISTAN AND ASKED FOR ABDULLAH'S COMMENT. THE DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER CATEGORICALLY DENIED THE EXISTENCE OF SUCH CAMPS AND SAID HE HAD INVITED PAK AMBASSADOR ARSHAD TO TELL HIM WHERE THE CAMPS MIGHT BE AND THEN HE (ABDULLAH) WOULD GO WITH THE AMBASSADOR TO SHOW THAT THE REPORTS WEREN'T TRUE.

5. I THEN SAID THAT THERE HAD BEEN BROADCAST ATTRIBUTED TO RADIO AFGHANISTAN THAT REFERRED TO "A COUNTDOWN ON SHERPAO'S LIFE" AND "(SHERPAO'S) LIFE WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE IF HE STAYS ON PAKTOON SOIL." ABDULLAH DENIED THAT SUCH MATERIAL HAD BEEN ON RADIO AFGHANISTAN AND CLAIMED HE PERSONALLY MONITORED ALL POLITICAL BROADCASTS."

6. ABDULLAH THEN SAID HE THOUGHT I SHOULD KNOW THERE WERE ELEMENTS THE AFGHAN SOCIETY WHO LINKED PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO'S TRIP TO THE U.S. WITH THE NEW BELLIGERENCE TOWARD THE PUSTUNS AND AFGHANISTAN. ABDULLAH NOTED THAT SIMILAR LINKAGE STORIES CIRCULATED AFTER AYUB TRIP TO WASHINGTON 12 YEARS AGO. ABDULLAH AND GHAUS INDICATED THEY JUST WANTED TO SHARE THESE RUMORS.

7. AFTER STATING THAT THIS TYPE OF STORY WAS TOTALLY UN-FOUNDED, I ASKED WHETHER THE REPORTED VIEW ALLEGING A CONNECTION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER'S WASHINGTON TRIP AND THE RECENT INCREASE IN PAK/AF TENSION WAS A VIEW SHARED BY THE GOA. ABDULLAH SAID CERTAINLY NOT. I ASKED WHETHER THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (MFA) WAS WARNING US ABOUT THE PERSONAL SECURITY OF THE CONFIDENTIAL

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U.S. COMMUNITY. ABDULLAH AND GHAUS BOTH SOMEWHAT HASTILY (I THOUGHT) BACKED AWAY FROM SUGGESTING THERE ARE SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS FOR US. I SAID I THOUGHT THAT MY SUPERIORS IN WASHINGTON MIGHT THINK THAT THE GOA, KNOWING OF THESE RUMORS, KNOWING THEY WERE UNTRUE AND BEING A FRIENDLY COUNTRY, WOULD TAKE SOME STEPS TO SCOTCH THEM. THERE WERE MORE DENIALS THAT THIS WAS ANYTHING MORE THAN RUMORS AND I DID NOT COMMENT FURTHER.

8. EMBASSY COMMENT:

THE AFGHANS AT THE MEETING AND PARTICULARLY WAHEED ABDULLAH, SEEMED NOTICABLY MORE NERVOUS THIS EVENING (FEBRUARY 13) ABOUT GOP INTENTIONS TOWARD "THEIR KINSMEN" AND AFGHANISTAN. ONE REASON MAY BE GROWING PRESSURE ON THE GOA FROM PASHTUN NATIONALISTS WHO WANT KABUL TO STAND UP AND BE COUNTED AS NAP LEADERS AND OTHER NATIONALISTS ARE SWEEPED UP BY PAKISTANI POLICE.

THE SO-CALLED RUMOR ABOUT LINKAGE BETWEEN WASHINGTON VISITS BY PAK LEADERS FOLLOWING BY PAK/AF CONFRONTATION RAISES THE POSSIBILITY THAT PRESIDENT ADAOUD HIMSELF IS FOCUSING ON THE EVENTS IN PAKISTAN, AND IS LOOKING BACK TO 1963 AND IS PONDERING THE EVENTS THAT LED TO HIS EXIT FROM POWER OVER A PAK/AFGHAN CRISIS ACCOMPANIED BY BORDER CLOSURES AND SERIOUS ECONOMIC DISLOCATION. WE HAVE SEEN SOME INDICATIONS IN PAST THAT GOA MAY HAVE AN UN-REALISTIC IMPRESSION OF US INFLUENCE OVER PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO AND IS TRYING A (WE THINK FEEBLE) PLOY TO HAVE USG PULL CHESTNUTS FROM A FIRE KABUL FEARS IT CAN NOT CONTROL. WE DO NOT THINK THE PLOY SHOULD RECEIVE ANY FURTHER SERIOUS ATTENTION UNLESS AND UNTIL SECURITY BECOMES A PROBLEM.

9. WE PLAN TO CONTINUE OUR PRESENT POSTURE OF URGING RESTRAINT, ENCOURAGING GOA TO DISASSOCIATE ITSELF FROM ACTS OF TERROR AND ASKING MFA TO DOCUMENT ANY OVERT HOSTILE ACTS BY PAKISTAN.

10. IN ABSENCE ANY RPT ANY INDICATIONS OF A MILITARY ALERT OR ANY OTHER OVERT PREPARATIONS FOR A SECURITY CRISIS IN KABUL, WE WILL CONTINUE TO CLOSE TOUCH WITH MFA AND MONITOR THE GENERAL SITUATION HERE CLOSELY.

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NOTE BY OC/T: ##AS RECEIVED.
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